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## **REGULATIONS ON USE**

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This website and the materials herewith supplied have been developed by members of the Language and Cognition Department of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (formerly the Cognitive Anthropology Research Group). In a number of cases materials were designed in collaboration with staff from other MPI departments.

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#### **Background**

The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

#### **Contact**

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## **12. Story book stimulus for the elicitation of external possessor constructions and dative constructions ("The circle of dirt")**

Compilers: Sonja Eisenbeiss and Bill McGregor; Artist: Claudia Maria Schmidt

This sequence of thirty drawings has been designed primarily for the elicitation of external possessor constructions or EPCs — previously generally referred to as “possessor raising” or “possessor ascension” constructions — and secondarily for related constructions such as two place predicates with datives. (See below for a brief description of the main construction types being sought with this stimulus.) The data gathered will be primarily relevant to the Argument Structure Project.

Two copies of the “story” are provided: one intended to be used with the consultants, and one as a guide to the fieldworker. Marked on each page of the fieldworker’s guide are the main utterance types that it is hoped will be elicited from the depicted scene.

### **Structure of the booklets**

The drawings were not intended to make a good narrative, though we aimed as far as possible to give it some story line, and there is an obvious temporal sequence throughout, from the first to the last drawing.

- Except for the first two drawings, the remaining twenty-eight drawings fall into obvious pairs, between which there are contrasts that can be highlighted in the elicitation session. For this reason the book is laid out as it is, so that when open the two pages are contrasting pairs.
- The investigator’s version (i.e. the fieldworker’s quide) has each contrasting pair reproduced on a single page, with an indication of the major salient points of contrast. This will be helpful because in some cases the difference between the drawings is not immediately obvious (except for experts in “spot the difference” puzzles).
- Coding in the fieldworker’s guide:
  - a thick unbroken border surrounds EPC sentences;
  - a thick broken border surrounds three place predicates;
  - continuous grey fill indicates locative constructions;
  - grey dot fill indicates two place predicates with datives.

In addition to this coding, explicit mention is redundantly made in the header for each box of the relevant type. Of course, the qualification “candidate” or “potential” is always to be understood.

### **Usage: possible elicitation tasks**

The drawings are quite rich in detail, and can be put to a variety of uses. There are five main ways in which the materials can be used. They are rank-ordered below. The first, being the most important, has been bolded; we hope that everyone will collect this information.

- 1. Go through the book page by page with a consultant or consultants, ensuring that the major utterances indicated in the Investigator's version of the story have been elicited. The utterances have also been prioritised: thick black borders indicate the highest priority, grey fills, lower priority.**
2. Let the consultant look through the entire booklet, from beginning to end, and request that they retell the story from memory. Make it clear that they can ask any question about the drawings to clarify what is represented.
3. Request that the consultant go through the book from beginning to end, with the book open in front of them, relating what is going on in each drawing. Draw their attention to the contrasting pairs of drawings.
4. Go through the book page by page with the consultant, pointing to every aspect of the drawing, and attempting to get as complete as possible a description of each. Use the book as a tool for elicitation!
5. Make copies of each drawing on separate suitably sized sheets, and use in a matching game in the same way as the "Men and trees" stimulus.

### **Brief description of the four construction types**

1. EXTERNAL POSSESSOR CONSTRUCTIONS: The following definition is extracted from the beginning of Doris Payne's and Immanuel Barshi's Introduction to *External possession* (Payne and Barshi, in press):

We take core instances of external possession (EP) to be constructions in which a semantic possessor-possessum relation is expressed by coding the possessor (PR) as a core grammatical relation of the verb and in a constituent separate from that which contains the possessum (PM). In some languages, the PR can simultaneously be expressed by a pronoun or pronominal affix internal to the NP containing the PM, as in a Genitive-NP construction; but this Genitive-NP-internal coding cannot be the only expression of the PR. As a core grammatical relation, the PR may be expressed as subject, direct object, indirect object or dative, or as ergative or absolute depending on the language type — but not, for example, as an oblique. That is, the PR is expressed like a direct, governed, argument of one of the three universally attested basic predicate types (intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive). The possessor-possessum relationship cannot reside in a possessive lexical predicate such as *have*, *own* or *be located at* and the lexical verb root does not in any other way have a PR within its core argument frame.

We mention three main types for the reader's guidance (obviously we are not aiming at completeness):

(a) *possessum-locative type constructions*, in which the possessum occurs in a locative-marked phrase, as in English, e.g.:

*Mary kissed John on the cheek* (cf. *Mary kissed John on the train*)

*Mary shot John in the foot* (cf. *Mary shot John in the theatre*)

Note that it is not universally agreed that this is an EPC — Payne and Barshi in press do not regard it as such, for reasons that we fail to comprehend.

(b) *dative EPCs*, such as are found in many Indo-European languages, e.g.:

la tête lui tourne French  
 the head 3sg:DAT turns  
 'S/he is dizzy.' (Lit: 'the head turns on/to her.')

Ich wasche mir die Hände German  
 I wash 1sg:DAT the:ACC:PL hands  
 'I wash my hands.'

Likewise, not everyone agrees that the dative represents a distinct construction type — e.g. Shibatani 1994.

(c) *Identically Marked Constructions*, in which the possessor and possessum NPs are marked identically, but they serve distinct grammatical relations: the possessor an argument role, the possessum a non-argument role. Included here are the so-called double subject constructions of Chinese and Japanese, and comparable double object and double subject constructions in many Australian Aboriginal languages (e.g. Hale 1981, ). Examples are the following from Nyulnyulan languages of Kimberley, Western Australia, where both NPs are identically marked, but the possessor (single underline), not the possessum (double underline), is cross-referenced in the verb (bolded):

ngaji juyu marru nyily mi-nyjun Yawuru  
 INTER you head headache 2minNOM-say  
 'Do you have a headache?' (More literally, 'Do you ache head?')

kinya -na kirwa ø-namana-ngayu, kanyjingana -na, Warrwa  
 this -ERG bad 3minNOM -put-1minACC lightning -ERG  
nimidi ngajanu.  
 leg my  
 'I got a shock from the lightning, in my leg.' (More literally, 'The lightning made me bad my leg.')

ngayi -ni malbulu nga-nkulalmany-ø nimarrangka -ni  
 I -ERG coolamon 1minNOM-made-3minACC hand -ERG  
 'I made the coolamon with my hands.' (Stokes 1982:126) Nyikina

Some significant questions in relation to EPCs include:

- Do the EPCs represent a distinct construction type in the language?
- What, if any, restrictions exist on the grammatical roles that can be borne by the possessor NP?
- What range of possessa may enter into EPCs?
- How do EPCs contrast semantically with comparable non-EPCs (e.g. *Mary kissed John on the cheek* vs. *Mary kissed John's cheek*)

Many of the scenes in the "Circle of dirt" booklet are geared to answer just these questions. For instance, many of the examples listed as potential EPCs show body parts as apparent semantic instruments. (The Nyulnyulan examples indicate that it is possible to have EPCs with the possessor as transitive subject (thus semantic instrument), intransitive subject, and transitive object.)

2. THREE PLACE PREDICATES: By these we refer to ditransitive constructions prototypically involving the verb 'give'. These have been included because in some languages they are structurally similar (or identical) with dative EPCs. Examples are:

*The woman gave the girl a piece of chicken*

*Die Frau gibt dem Mädchen ein Stück Kuchen*  
 the:NOM:FEM:sg woman gives the:DAT:NEUT:sg girl a:ACC:NEUT:sg  
 piece cake  
 'The woman gives the girl a piece of cake.'

3. TWO PLACE PREDICATES WITH DATIVES: Here we refer primarily to bivalent clause types in which one argument is in the dative. Such constructions are found in many languages, including Indo-European and Australian:

*Das Mädchen hilft seiner Mutter nicht gerne*  
 the:NOM:NEUT:sg girl help 3:DAT:FEM:sg mother not happily  
 'The girl does not willingly help her mother.'

*nganyi -ngga jiginya -yoo moow-la-nhi* Gooniyandi  
 I -ERG child -DAT seek-1sgNOM+A-3sgOBL  
 'I looked for the child.'

4. LOCATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS: There are obviously numerous locational relations depicted in the drawings. Those marked in the investigator's booklet are the ones that are most relevant to EPCs, and which might potentially be represented in a language by EPCs or similar constructions. These are the ones that involve location with respect to parts of persons and things, rather than locations as such. For instance, in Nyulnyulan languages we find examples such as:

*yaalu ø-jarra-jina nyinka -n, ninja -n jina.*  
 stand 3minNOM-stood-3sgOBLthis -LOC back -LOC his  
 '(The snake) stood up behind his back.' Warrwa

Here we find both the possessor and the possessum represented in the locative, but the possessor only cross-referenced in the verb.

#### FINAL REMARKS

We encourage you to use this booklet creatively in the field: there are many visual representations that we expect might help elicit utterances that would prove difficult to elicit out of context.

Please pass on your experiences to us so we can produce an improved version next year.

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